

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-13

ACDA-07 SSM-03 /085 W

-----270225Z 004732 /72/47

O R 251205Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3784

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1871

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y FOR TEXT NEXT LAST LINE AGAIN VICE AGAINST

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, MOPS, LE, SY

SUBJECT: SYRIAN OPERATIONS AGAINST REJECTIONISTS IN SOUTHERN

WEST

BEIRUT

1. SUMMARY: AFTER INCIDENT APRIL 22 IN WHICH TWO SYRIAN SOLDIERS WERE KILLED BY LEBANESE LEFTISTS, ASF MOVED TO CHEARL REJECTIONISTS AND LEFTIST ELEMENTS FROM AREA BETWEEN CORNICHE MAZRAA AND SABRA CAMPS AND TO FIND WEAPON CACHES. FIGHTING PARTICULARLY INTENSE APRIL 24, BUT MOST CASUALTIES WERE CIVILIAN. AS OF EARLY APRIL 25 SITUATION APPEARS QUIETER, BUT TIGHT SECURITY MEASURES IN AREA CONTINUE. ACTION COMES
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IN WAKE OF NEW SAIQA INFILTRATION AT TYRE AND IN THE BEIRUT CAMPS, BUT SYRIAN MOVE TO ENTER THE CAMPS AT THIS TIME APPEARS UNLIKELY . END SUMMARY

2. FLAREUP STARTED NIGHT OF APRIL 21-22, WHEN, ACCORDING TO AN ASF COMMUNIQUE APRIL 24, "FOUR ARMED ELEMENTS BELONGING IN THE BACK STREETS OF CHYAH. FROM MILITARY SOURCES WE

HEAR THAT THE FOUR HAD BEEN ACTUALLY ARRESTED FOR A KIDNAPPING SYRIAN GUARDS AND KILLED THEM. THERE ARE ALSO REPORTS OF A RESULTANT SHOOTING INCIDENT NEAR MAKASSAD HOSPITAL, IN WHICH THERE DAUDI ASF SOLDIERS WERE WOUNDED.

3. SYRIANS, AND NEW LEBANESE COMMANDER OF ASF, COL. SAMI KHATIB (WHO HAS SAID THAT NO ELEMENT, ESPECIALLY THE PALESTINIANS, SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO HINDER THE PEACE PROCESS), MAY HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR JUST SUCH A PRETEXT. FURTHERMORE, SYRIAN BRIGADE IN WEST BEIRUT HAD BEEN REPLACED DURING PRECEDING TEN DAYS AND THE FRESH TROOPS WERE USED IN THE ACTION. IN ANY CASE, SYRIAN ASF BEGAN CLEARING OPERATION IN ROUGHLY ONE SQUARE KILOMETER AREA BETWEEN CORNISHE MAZRAA AND SABRA CAMP DIRECTIONED AGAINST BOTH PALESTINIAN REJECTIONISTS (PFLP-GC-AHMED JABRIL FACTION) AND LEBANESE LEFTIST ALLIES (MURABITUN, PARTICULARLY ISAM AL ARAB GROUP).

4. ON APRIL 24, ASF ELEMENTS ON CORNICHE MAZRAA HAD FIRE FIGHT WITH FORCES IN SUPPORT OF PALESTINIANS IN AREA OF SABIL ST., BETWEEN MAZRAA AND MAKASSAD HOSPITAL ISAM AL ARAB'S OFFICE WAS DESTROYED, ACCORDING TO ISF SOURCES. ONE ASF COMMUNIQUE CLAIMED THE ORIGINAL FOUR CULPRITS WERE ARRESTED, AND A LATER COMMUNIQUE SAID THE CLEARING OPERATION HAD BEEN COMPLETED AT 1800.

5. FIRING WAS INTENSE, VICTIMIZING MOSTLY CIVILIANS IN THE AREA RATHER THAN ARMED ELEMENTS. AS OF EARLY APRIL 25, AMERICAN UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL HAD RECEIVED SOME 40 WOUNDED, CONFIDENTIAL

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ALL CIVILIANS, AND PERHAPS TOTAL OF 100 MAY HAVE BEEN WOUNDED. ASF COMMUNIQUE ADMITS ONLY THAT THREE SOLDIERS WOUNDED, BUT DATT SOURCES GIVE TOTAL ASF CASUALTIES AS APPROXIMATELY 15 KILLED, 20 WOUNDED, SEVEN ARMORED VEHICLES DESTROYED AND 20-25 PFLP PRISONERS TAKEN. THE SYRIANS USED TANKS AND DIRECT FIRE ARTILLERY AGAINST PALESTINIAN ANTI-TANK ROCKET LAUNCHERS AND HEAVY MACHINE GUNS.

6. SYRIAN PRESIDENTIAL ENVOY CO. COHAMMED AL KHOULI, WHO WAS IN BEIRUT APRIL 23, RETURNED AGAIN APRIL 24 APPARENTLY TO MAINTAIN CONTACTS AMONG THE SYRIANS, PALESTINIANS, AND LEBANESE ELEMENTS AND PERHAPS TO NEGOTIATE SOME NEW ARRANGEMENT.

7. SITUATION IS QUIETER EARLY APRIL 25, BUT SNIPER FIRE CONTINUES FROM ESTIMATED 30-PLUS HARD CORE REJECTIONIST ELEMENTS REMAINING IN QREA. AT MID-DAY APRIL 25 WE HEAR THAT ROCKETS ARE BEING USED. ASF IS CLOSELY CONTROLLING TRAFFIC IN PERIMETER AREA, REJECTIONIST MAY SEEK DIVERT

ASF ATTENTION BY PROVOKING INCIDENTS ELSEWHERE IN CITY.
WE HAVE ONE REPORT THAT REJECTIONIST ELEMENTS WERE SEEN
IN CIVILIAN ATTIRE EARLY APRIL 25 IN THE RAOUCHE
AREA, BUT DISCUSSIONS WITH ISF OFFICERS INDICATE NO WIDE-
SPREAD TREND.

8. COMMENT: INTENSITY OF SYRIAN ACTION AT THIS TIME IS
SURPRISING. MOVES MAY HAVE BEEN SIMPLE RESPONSE, IN
FORCE, TO PROVOCATION, OR MAY BE CALCULATED AS GESTURE TO
DEMANDS OF CHRISTIANS FOR ACTION TO IMPLEMENT CAIRO ACCORDS.
IT FOLLOWS INFILTRATION AND AMBUSH OF SAIQA AND NON-REJEC-
TIONIST PFLP-GC AHMED JABRIL FACTION ELEMENTS IN TYRE
APRIL 21, AS WELL AS INCREASED RECENT INFILTRATION OF SABRA
AND CHATILA BY SAIQA ELEMENTS.

9. AT DINNER GATHERING ATTENDED BY EMBOFFS EVENING OF
APRIL 23, LARGELY OF MODERATE "CHEHABIST" CHRISTIAN PERSONALI-
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TIES, SEVERAL OUTGOING SYRIAN ARTILLERY ROUNDS FROM THE RUE
VERDUN BATTERY AREA WERE HEARD. GENERAL CONSENSUS AMONG
GUESTS WAS THAT, AT LAST, SYRIANS WERE BEGINNING TO MOVE
AGAIN. WE BELIEVE IT UNLIKELY, HOWEVER, THAT SYRIANS PLAN
TO ENTER THE CAMPS IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, SINCE THEY
LACK THE HEAVY CONCENTRATION OF TROOPS IN THE VICINITY
THAT WOULD BE NEEDED IN THE FACE OF CERTAIN DETERMINED
OPPOSITION (DEMONSTRATED AGAIN LAST WEEK BY RENEWED FATAH
ACTIVITY IN THE CAMPS STRENGTHENING DEFENSIVE POSITIONS.)
PARKER

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NNN

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